

Spy Role Claim Shocks Downed Pilot's Family

The family of Francis G. Powers, the captive American pilot, was stunned last night by news the United States now considers he may have been on a spy mission when shot down by the Russians.

"We're just shocked—we still don't believe it," said a sister, Mrs. Janice P. Melvin of 1604 Nealon drive, Falls Church, Va.

Mrs. Melvin, along with her four sisters, hurried to join their parents in Mill Creek Va., after Premier Khrushchev disclosed their brother's plane had been shot down.

Mrs. Melvin said that, as far as anyone in the family knew, Mr. Powers was working for the Lockheed Aircraft Corp., and was assigned to high-altitude weather research for the National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

Pilot's Mother Is Ill

She said word of the United States announcement came as had all other news of her brother—through a call from a newspaper reporter. She said her father might have had some official word from the Government, but had not yet told the family.

The pilot's mother, who is ill, reacted with "disbelief" to the Government announcement, Mrs. Melvin said.

"She's been told a little about it, but not much," she said.

The Government statement dimmed the joy which had swept the family earlier when it was announced Mr. Powers was alive. They planned to attend services today at the Church of Christ in Pound, Va., to pray for his safe release.

"We are a religious family and we will pray to God, as we have been doing since last Sunday, that Francis will be released unharmed," Mrs. Melvin said.

Joy Restrained

The 30-year-old pilot's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver W. Powers of Mill Creek, in mountainous Wise County, Va., 150 miles from Washington, reacted with tears and restrained joy when they learned of

Mrs. Melvin said, "But we are still quite worried."

She said she would have planned to join the rest of the family in church Sunday but she has to meet her husband, Veril W. Melvin, an American Oil Co. employee, at the Roanoke Airport.

"I left Falls Church in such a hurry when I heard about my brother that I didn't bring much of anything with me," explained Mrs. Melvin. "My husband is bringing me some clothes and things."

Based in Turkey

The missing pilot had never been in Norway or Pakistan, as far as she knew, Mrs. Melvin told The Star when advised of Russian charges that he was flying across Russia on a spy mission from Pakistan to Norway. He was based near Adana, Turkey, she said.

The family was stunned by Red charges that her brother might be charged as a spy.

"That's just not true. It's not possible," said Joyce.

Members of the family said Mr. Powers left the Air Force some five years ago about the time he married the former

He was born in Jenkins, Ky., but spent most of his life in Columbus, Ga., and the Mill Creek area between Pound and Clintwood, Va.

Mr. Powers was a graduate of Milligan College, Johnson City, Tenn., where he starred in track and field events.

